



Photo by Paul Thompson

Frank Chance.

FRANK CHANCE ON THE JOB

BY BOZEMAN BULGER

repair them. I demanded three years in which to do this work, and it may take all that time. All I ask is that I am not expected to do it completely in one season."

"Then you think your material is much better than the public generally believes?" I asked him.

"Certainly it is," he replied. "We've got some good ball players here."

Frank Chance then took occasion to answer a question that is asked by nearly every fan in the country when he meets one professionally interested in the great national pastime; a question that is silly to a baseball manager, but of serious import to the enthusiast who does not understand.

"Yes, I know," he interrupted with a smile as the inquiry began. "You are going to tell me that the fans want to know why I don't get rid of all the worn-out veterans who have been on a losing team so long, and take a chance on youngsters who have been drafted from the minor leagues."

"Exactly."

"My first reason for not doing that," he went on, "is because it would be foolish. I started with only one new man in the lineup, and he is not exactly new. I am speaking of Derrick, the shortstop. I selected him so as to get the benefit of his experience with the Athletics, for whom he served a season as utility man. The responsibility is too great to risk the success of a club like this on an untried youngster. My greatest need is the experience that goes with veterans."

As he said this Chance turned and faced his interviewer squarely, as if to let the idea sink in. He was still toying with the bat.

"You must remember," he continued, "that baseball is a business just the same as any other enterprise. Our dividends depend on successful administration; results, in other words. Apply what I have just said to another business; a manufacturer, for instance. Suppose he wanted to make an important contract, and the only two men he had around his office were

an old employee, somewhat broken down, but with a knowledge of just what his employer wanted done, and a youngster who had just come in to learn the business. Which do you think he would send after that contract? Why, of course he would send the man of experience, even if he was a little slow. He might send the youngster along so that he would know what to do the next time; but he wouldn't trust him at the start with a contract that might affect the whole business.

"That is exactly why I have decided to build the foundation of a machine for the Highlanders on experience. The men I have selected for my regular team may not be so fast as some of the youngsters who are sitting on the bench, but they have been in the game long enough to know exactly what I want done. They can carry out my ideas. In time the youngsters will be able to do this, and then I shall work them in one by one. I prefer not to take a chance on them now.

"I have even sacrificed speed in one or two instances to get experience. This is particularly true of Roy Hartzell, at third base. Two or three of the recruits have made a bid for that position, and they look pretty good; but Hartzell is the right man there this season. He may not be the fastest man or the best ball player in the world; but he has faced the fire for several years, and knows what to do in a pinch. Though Derrick cannot be called a veteran, he has had a year in the big league, and because he has absorbed much information during that time I have chosen him for shortstop. Chase and myself will furnish the experience for the other side of the diamond. That gives me an infield well stocked in experience and above the average in ability."

BUT about speed?" I asked.

"Oh, I am strong for speed, all right. We must have it to win. I was just going to say that I have put Daniels in the outfield because he is fast, even if he does not hit quite so well as Lelivelt. I regard Daniels as one of the best base runners I ever saw. His arm may be a trifle weak; but I overcame that by putting him in right field at the Polo Grounds, where the distance to the fence is unusually short. Cree and Wolter are both good hitters and fast. They can take care of the other two gardens. So you can see I have a team pretty well able to stand the gaff. It suits me, anyway. I don't think there was ever any question about the pitching staff. Many clubs that have been real factors in the race would be glad to swap with me."

"Are you going to build this team according to the same general plans that you used in making the Cubs a winner?" was asked of Chance.

"I hope to," he replied; "but you must understand the situation is entirely different. When I took charge of the Cubs I had been a player on the team and had a pretty fair idea of what it needed. On the contrary, when I took charge of the New York club early this

spring I did not even know the players personally. As a matter of fact, it took me longer to get acquainted with the temperament or personal characteristics of my players than it did to learn their ability. And, believe me, knowledge of those little individual traits is very essential to a manager! Some players have to be led, others driven, and still others let alone. Some men do much better if allowed to use their own judgment; but first a manager must know from observation that they have good judgment. It may take me a whole season to find just where brains and strength are needed in this club.

"When I first took charge of the Cubs, for instance, I knew that we needed a man of experience and ability at third base, one who could balance the infield, and another in the outfield. I centered all my efforts on getting these men. Cost was not a consideration. Harry Steinfeldt, one of the best ball players in the country, was with the Cincinnati Reds at that time, and his long stay there had taken some of the pepper out of him. I figured that a change would do him good, and after some negotiations I got him. He proved to be the key to my infield situation."

THOUGH Chance, in modesty, refrained from mentioning the details of his next move, it was really the one that made him a power in baseball. He wanted one great outfielder, and began negotiations for Jimmy Sheckard of Brooklyn. Knowing that the acquisition of a fast runner and a good hitter like Sheckard would make his team complete, he let nothing stand in his way. Soon thereafter this new manager amazed the baseball world by giving four players, all of whom were considered valuable, for the one Brooklyn outfielder. Those who had laughed at what they thought his folly soon found that a master mind was on the job in Chicago. Steinfeldt and Sheckard proved to be the missing cogs in a machine that won four pennants and two world's championships.

As this was recalled to the mind of the man who, soon after his wonderful trade, acquired the sobriquet of the Peerless Leader, he rubbed the bat meditatively.

"You didn't mention anything about Miner Brown," I suggested.

"No, I wasn't thinking of that," he said, "because I am not worried about pitchers. Of course, I should like to have a man like him; but my present staff of twirlers is better than that which I had starting out as manager of the Cubs. I needed a good one then, and needed him badly. I had watched Brown at St. Louis, and his wonderful control charmed me. He was not considered such a star at that time, and that made it possible for me to get him at a reasonable sacrifice. I exchanged Jack Taylor for him. I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't find another Miner Brown right here in the New York staff of pitchers. Several of them have excellent control."

JUST then the Peerless Leader motioned to Pep Young, the recruit infielder, and handed him the bat that he had been inspecting. He nodded his head as if to say "That will do."

"What's the trouble about the bat?" I asked.

"Why, I noticed this morning," he explained, "that Young was late swinging at the ball. He was trying to use a stick that was too heavy. I told him to get a lighter one, so that he could snap at the ball instead of dragging at it."

That afternoon Young tried the new bat, and showed a wonderful improvement in his hitting. This is a sample of Frank Chance's wonderful powers of observation. Nothing escapes him, no matter how trifling. For six or eight weeks now he has been picking out those little flaws and correcting them.

A striking instance of this was when Chance detected the first flaw in Hal Chase's efforts at becoming a second baseman after having served so long at first.

"Get to the bag quicker so as to set yourself for the catcher's throw," Chance said to him, "or someone will cut you down."

At first base the baseman is not often required to touch the runner with the ball, and he consequently plays a good distance from the bag—playing "deep," the players call it. All that is required of him is to get there and catch the ball ahead of the runner. At second he must not only catch the ball, but must have himself in such position that he can put the ball on the fast-coming runner and get out of the way of the flying steel spikes. This technical difference so confused Chase at the outset that he was in constant danger of being seriously injured until Chance pointed out the fault. Hal says it still bothers him at times, as he finds it extremely difficult to overcome a habit of years.

"Great ball player, that," said Chance as he watched Chase experimenting with his new position, and this recalled his opening remark about the strength of his material.

SINCE you've found your material so much better than you had expected or the fans believed," was asked of the manager, "can you explain why the New

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MATERIAL?" and Frank Chance smiled as he repeated the word. "Why, I've got better material right now than I had for the making of the Cubs in either 1911 or 1912!"

The new twenty-five-thousand-dollar manager of the New York Americans looked as if expecting a surprise at this statement, and was rewarded. To appreciate the remark fully it must be remembered that the Cubs, four times champions of the National League, finished second after a hard fight in 1911 and gave the Giants a terrible scare in 1912. On the other hand, the New York material of which Chance speaks so glowingly has developed into what was considered a tailender for the last two or three years. To make the New York material of 1913 do what the Cub material did in 1911 and 1912, Frank Chance has been coaxed out of what he intended to be a retirement. The coaxing price is approximately twenty-five thousand dollars a year for three years. In the meantime the whole country looks on with interest.

"The opportunity is big, I know," said Chance; "but the responsibility is bigger."

This was not a casual remark. Chance had given it much thought. He does not fear the ultimate result; but is afraid the public will expect too much at the start.

And the public to Frank Chance does not mean New York alone. He is right now in the focus of an interest that spreads as far west as the Pacific Coast. His home is in California, and the people of that State are as eager for his personal success as are the fans of New York. The latter merely want a pennant. Chicago also has a decided interest in the undertaking. In that city, where Chance was ousted, in rather extraordinary circumstances, from the leadership of a ball team that he made nationally famous, his supporters would see him vindicated. They feel that he was unjustly treated. This feeling is just as strong on the coast, where pride in the Native Son is great. So, Frank Chance must win to please the whole country. His opportunity is national, and too big to be narrowed down to New York.

AS the New York manager was about to resume his discussion of material, one of the younger players came up and handed him a bat for inspection.

"Looks like a good one," he remarked, and as the youngster walked away the rugged athlete of a thousand diamond battles carefully tested the weight of the stick and the quality of the wood.

"Getting back to that material," he resumed as he absentmindedly stroked the bat with his bare hand, "I was left a team that I knew little about; but in this inheritance I believe I have the foundation of a winner. It will take sometime to build a machine; but we are going right at it. I must find the weak parts, and then